

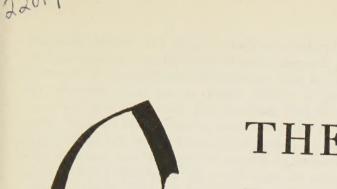
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THE BOOK GOD MADE





THE
BOOK
OD
MADE

J. CARTER SWAIM

1847

HAWTHORN BOOKS, INC., Publishers



New York

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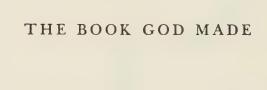
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THE BOOK GOD MADE :







HE BOOK GOD MADE

Constant though uncounted leader of all best-seller lists.

Pride of the book-maker's art, published in all sizes and shapes, in many a type face and every conceivable style of binding.

Object of hatred to atheist and unbeliever, burned by the fanatic, it freely offers forgiveness to all.

An Oriental book which yet tells of how men shall come from the east and the west and the north and south and sit down in the kingdom of God.

Timeless treasure whose household imagery of salt and yeast and bread, whose domestic scenes of

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penitent prodigals and forgiving fathers are as relevant to the age of automation as to the era of sheep and shepherds.

River of the water of life whose thirst-quenching property is as important to people who dwell beside the Amazon and the Yangtze and the Mississippi as ever it was for those who lived beside the Jordan or the Nile.

Bringer of the written word to primitive tribes; their speech reduced to writing so that it might become their first book.

Moving force behind the artist's brush, the poet's pen, the sculptor's chisel, the musician's urge, all striving to express what human beings find ultimately inexpressible.

Subject of the linguist's love and care, translated into far more languages than any other book, providing swift answer to the prayer, "O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise."

Meeting-place for all age groups; with little children welcome, with strength offered to the strong, with the promise that at evening time there shall be light.

- Lure to lead men onward, source of vision for the young, and even old men dreaming dreams.
- Pattern for the human family, with God as the father from whom every fatherhood, in heaven and on earth, derives its name and nature; and husbands to love their wives "as Christ loved the church."
- Sharer in the high moments of being: its phrases are pronounced at our baptism and confirmation; they make the sacraments meaningful; they bless us as we plight our troth at the altar; they are the last to which the dying respond; and they accompany us into the valley of the shadow.
- Bond of the separated family: loved ones with mountains and oceans between daily read an agreed upon passage and find that near and far are both alike to God.
- Enlarger of our sympathies, bringing within our ken the widow and the orphan, the hungry and the naked, the stranger and the prisoner.
- Picture of society as it might be, where poverty has ceased to fester and every man sits under his own vine and fig tree; where reward shall be for service rendered, and every man help and cheer his neighbor.

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- Sanctifier of the common life, with sower and reaper, smith and artisan as exemplars of duty well and faithfully done.
- Reconciler of urban and rural citizens; in its pages the city dweller learns something of the good earth and the wonders of life known to the farmer and the herdsman; and the farm boy learns to look for a "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."
- Mirror of our human nature, showing the sinfulness even of good men, picturing us all as bad as we are, but no worse than we are, and promising that where sin increases grace will all the more abound.
- Destroyer of the dividing wall of hostility, reconciling all races to God and bringing enmity to an end.
- Leveler of barriers between the classes, countenancing no distinction between bond and free, rich and poor, learned and unlearned.
- Vehicle of the grace of God, conveying it more surely than the bishop's hands or the forms of church order.

Inspirer of the universal hope that men

"shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Shaper of man's theology, revealer of all that he really knows about God.

Focal point of public worship: its words solemnly read in the great congregation; its affirmations giving wings to song; and angelic choirs joining with our own; its texts remembered when sermons are long forgotten.

Handbook of private devotion: its phrases fashioning our best prayers, its wisdom lending direction to life.

Textbook for group study, yielding unexpected wealth where two or three are gathered—with Another in their midst.

Analyst of human behavior, exposer of hidden motives, foe of all pretense; our psychologies are but footnotes to what is here so succinctly told.

Bearer through the ages of the everlasting Gospel.

Herald of the Cross, proclaiming Christ publicly portrayed as crucified.

The Book God Made

Testimony that through His death death itself is dead and He is the Resurrection and the Life.

"The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for ever."





HAT IS THE BIBLE?

THE BIBLE is for all times, all places, all peoples.

Inside Russia the greatest discontent of recent years was occasioned by a novel which described how the inventor of a machine to improve the manufacture of plumbing pipes, becoming entangled in the red tape of the Red state, was banished to Siberia because his ambitions ran athwart those of a party official. The author, Vladimir Dudintsev, found his title in the Bible: Not By Bread Alone.

A London lawyer, turned playwright, became a distinguished figure of the British and American theater. For three decades he wrote a play a year. John Van Druten was always a seeker, ever in quest

of a solution to the riddle of the universe. Five years before his death in 1957, he wrote of man's awareness that "the old, the Bible texts are still true." "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses himself?"—this, Van Druten called an eternal question that still has power to disturb.

Here are two twentieth-century men in widely different cultures turning to the Bible for the expression of profoundest thought. The Russian novelist finds the economic and political situation summed up in words that Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3). A British dramatist finds the Bible compelling man to look in its pages for answers to the right questions.

The Bible is a book of religion. We shall never understand it by approaching it otherwise. It is not a textbook in mathematics. I Kings 7:23 describes one of the vessels in the sanctuary as "round, ten cubits from brim to brim . . . and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference." A schoolboy knows that anything which is ten cubits in diameter must be 31.416 cubits in circumference. But this has nothing whatever to do with our eternal salvation. Psalm 19:6 assumes that the sun rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other end. This is not good astronomy. Isaiah 11:12 talks about "the

four corners of the earth." We should not want this kind of geography taught in our schools.

Genesis 7:11 describes a deluge that resulted when "the windows of the heavens were opened." The United States Weather Bureau has more prosaic ways of analyzing the meteorological factors that lead to a flood. Mark 4:31 says that a mustard seed "is the smallest of all the seeds on earth." Botanists would not agree to that—but this does not invalidate Jesus' word about the power of a little faith, even though it be as small as a mustard grain. The Bible does not have any geology. The Bible is not a book of metaphysics. Metaphysics, by definition, is what comes after physics—and the Bible has no physics.

College students sometimes come to the Bible as literature. It is a book that contains many different kinds of literature: fables (read for example Judges 9:7-15), census rolls, laws, historical narrative, military chronicles, government annals, poetry of many kinds (nature, romance, dramatic, didactic, work songs, battle songs, hymns for worship), wise sayings, letters, mystic visions. Various translations of the Bible are sometimes used in literature courses, and the English versions of successive eras often have striking links with extra-Biblical literature. Chaucer, in the *Canterbury Tales*, pictures the "povre Persoun":

What Is the Bible?

But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve, He taughte, but first he folwed it him-selve.

This is believed to be a description of John Wyclif, a contemporary translator of the Bible whom Chaucer very much admired.

Old versions of the Bible are sometimes loved as old linen is loved, or old china. Special poetic quality is often thought to inhere in these, but this can be an illusion. Back in 1918 Thomas Hardy made in his journal a significant entry on this subject. Makers of English Bibles, he said, "translated into the language of their age; then the years began to corrupt that language as spoken and to add gray lichen to the translation; until the moderns who use the corrupted tongue marvel at the poetry of the old words. When new they were not half so poetical."

◆§NOT

PRIMARILY

LITERATURE

Advertising executives sometimes urge their employees to study the Bible in order to imitate its succinct style. God's Book, however, was not given

as an aid in the preparation of advertising copy, nor was it designed primarily as literature. There are some Old Testament passages which, quite incidentally, can claim literary distinction, but it is seldom if ever true of the New Testament. In the original Greek its literary style is usually not of a high order, and translators feel compelled to pretty up its mistakes in grammar.

When Christians in the Galatian communities lapsed into their old racial prejudices and practices, Paul sensed that, if this were allowed to prevail, it would mean the end of Christianity. To those wavering believers he dashed off a letter at white heat. He would no doubt send us an equally fiery epistle if he thought we were patronizing what he wrote by classifying it as "beautiful literature." Paul's feeling on this matter will be apparent to any minister who, having poured out his heart and soul in a sermon seeking to move his people to a course of action, is greeted by his parishioners at the door: "My, what a beautiful sermon!"

Unlike other books of religion, the Bible is based on "the majesty of what has happened." It deals not in ethereal imaginings but in what took place on this very real earth. It is in that sense a book of history—and richer than any other book of history. Its early chapters tell of how God made choice of Abraham and his descendants to be the bearers of his revelation; and of how the promise grew dim when the chosen people became a race of slaves. But God raised up Moses, a deliverer who led in escape from Pharaoh's bondage. Through a generation of hardship in wilderness wanderings, the disorganized escapees were molded into a nation. Desiring to be like all the nations, Israel had a succession of kings. Solomon tried to outdo at his court the splendor of Oriental monarchs, and the excesses and extravagances of his reign so weakened the nation's vitality that it became an easy prey to foreign invasion.

Carried away captive into exile, the people learned to sing the Lord's song in Babylon's strange land. Through all these vicissitudes the people hoped for a Messiah who would "slay their foes and lift them high." Released from exile, a remnant returned to the homeland to make a fresh start, trying pathetically to rebuild the glory that had been Jerusalem. Many greeted this new venture with enthusiasm, but some "old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid" (Ezra 3:12).

During this period religion became somewhat formalized, but great historic movements were at work beyond the bounds of Judaism. Alexander was spreading Greek culture everywhere and giving the world a common language. The Romans were the next to dream of empire and they linked far-flung provinces together in a network of roads that made travel remarkably easy. Then it was "when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son" (Galatians 4:4). Hebrew hopes found fulfillment in a child born in Bethlehem. Across Roman roads his apostles sped to carry good news, and their use of the Greek tongue enabled them to be understood everywhere.

◆§DESTINY

OF NATIONS

INTERTWINED

Thus it came about that the New Testament was written, not in the Hebrew language, but in Greek. And here is a parable of how the lives of the people of God were bound up with the lives of other nations. The Bible is a book of history, but not of one nation only. In it we study the history of the Hebrews, but their destiny was intertwined with that of all the Middle Eastern empires: Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Greece, Rome. In it we read of Hittites and Ninevites, of Medes and Persians, of Edomites and Moabites.

There is a sense in which the Bible is our only book of history. It is the Judeo-Christian religion which has given us the idea of history. The ancient Greeks did not have it. For them, everything went round in circles, each age ending just where it had begun. The Bible assumes that history has a beginning, a middle, and an end. "In the beginning was the Word"—that is to say, God's creative idea, God's expressed purpose of good. "When the time had fully come," the Word, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, came and tented among us. Christ's cross stands at the center of eternity, and the exalted Christ "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God" (I Corinthians 15:24, 25).

The Christian philosophy of history is that time does not represent an endless turning back upon itself. The whole "creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God... the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:19, 21). The Bible is a basically optimistic book. Its golden age is not in the past. Its heroes do not sit down and mourn the good old days. They look forward with hope.

Since the Bible does have the linear, rather than

the circular, view of history, it is not surprising that its events can be historically dated. The Exodus took place in the time of the Pharaohs. The exile occurred when Nebuchadnezzar was king. The return took place under Cyrus. Jesus was born "in the days of Herod the king" (Matthew 2:1). The church continues to confess that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate." Only, we have a new system of dating now that discloses the fact that Christ is the focal point of history. Everything now is either Before Christ or in the Year of our Lord.

This is what we mean by saying that the Bible is our only book of history. All other history books are simply commentary upon it. Even the monumental historical summaries undertaken by the men of our time are simply footnotes to the Biblical summary:

But the Lord sits enthroned for ever, he has established his throne for judgment; and he judges the world with righteousness, he judges the peoples with equity.

(Psalm 9:7, 8)

♥§A UNIVERSAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

While the sacred books of most religions tell of the mysterious doings of a thousand gods and goddesses, the Bible tells of a Creator God who is also the God and Father of Jesus and of all men who are willing to acknowledge sonship. No sacred book has in it so many people as the Bible.

The Bible is a Universal Portrait Gallery in which there are to be found pictures of all sorts of men and women. Kings and queens are here: Solomon importing for the amusement of his court ivory, apes and peacocks (I Kings 10:22); the Queen of Sheba and her "very great retinue, with camels bearing spices, and very much gold, and precious stones" (I Kings 10:2); Nebuchadnezzar demanding that all and sundry fall down and worship the great image of gold which he had set up, "whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits" (Daniel 3:1).

Counselors to kings are here: Joseph, food administrator for the Egyptian government in a time of famine; Isaiah advising Ahaz not to be too greatly troubled at the presence of the Assyrian army, since

"a young woman shall conceive and bear a son . . . before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good" (Isaiah 7:14, 16), deliverance will be wrought; Nehemiah, cupbearer to Artaxerxes. Judges are here: Jephtha and Gideon and Samson. Reformers are here: Joshua destroying the high places of the Canaanites, Elijah wreaking havoc upon the priests of Baal, Josiah blotting out the worship of the false gods.

Great religious leaders are here: Abraham, venturing out not knowing where he was to go, but sure only that he could not go on living as he had been living; Samuel declaring that "to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Samuel 15:22); Hosea, who heard God say:

"It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms;

I led them with cords of compassion,

with the bands of love" (Hosea 11:4).

To these leaders God spoke, even though they were discouraged to the point of running away. To Moses the refugee "the angel of the Lord appeared . . . in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Exodus 3:2). To the despondent Elijah God spoke in "the wilderness . . . under a broom tree" (I Kings 19:4).

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To Jonah, rebelling against the divine compulsion to proclaim God's love to foreigners, God spoke in the shade of a castor oil plant (Jonah 4:6).

⇒§COMMON
PEOPLE,
TOO

Bible History does not revolve about great names only. Common people are here, too, in great profusion: a village smithy filled with the Spirit of God (Exodus 31:1-5); a peasant who defended the people with no weapon but an oxgoad (Judges 3:31); a smallholder who "had nothing but one little ewe lamb . . . and it was like a daughter to him" (II Samuel 12:3); loyal friends of David who risked their lives to get him a drink from his favorite well (II Samuel 23:13-17); a land-owner who prized his patrimony so much he defied a king even though it cost him his life (I Kings 21:1-14); fishermen who left their nets and tax-collectors who left the counting-house and carpenters who left the joiner's shop when the Lord of love came by; a devout man "looking for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25); a native of Cyprus whose comrades nicknamed him "Son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36). These are they of whom it is written:

"they keep stable the fabric of the world, and their prayer is in the practice of their trade."

No sacred book has so many worthy women: Hannah weaving a new robe each year and taking it to the boy whom she had lent to the Lord (I Samuel 1:27; 2:19); Naomi, who, though her lot was bitter, has given a new connotation to "mother-in-law"; a widow with a never failing cruse of oil; a homemaker who got her husband to add a special room to the house so they could take care of itinerant prophets (II Kings 4:8-11); Rizpah, watching over the bodies of her slain sons "from the beginning of harvest" until the rainy season began (II Samuel 21:10); a sinful woman who loved much because she was forgiven much (Luke 7:36-50); Dorcas, whose death was mourned by poor people "showing coats and garments" which she had made and given away (Acts 9:36-39); Eunice and Lois, who passed on a glorious heritage of faith to son and grandson (II Timothy 1:5). In all the Gospels there is no instance of a woman who was hostile to Christ.

Children, too, are here: Joseph, a shepherd boy who was a dreamer of dreams; Samuel, a lad devoted to the service of the temple, who heard God speak

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at a time when "there was no frequent vision;" Isaiah, for whom a king's death was a shattering and transforming experience; Jeremiah, protesting when summoned to great responsibility: "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth;" a servant girl who knew better than a general where help was to be obtained; a lad whose lunch, blessed by love, fed a multitude; a girl so filled with joy at hearing an apostle's voice that she rushed to tell the others, leaving the door unopened. Small boys at Bethel made fun of a prophet's bald head. Children in Nazareth played at weddings and at funerals. Zechariah is sure that in the New Jerusalem "the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets."

⊌§NOT PERFECT, BUT DEDICATED

Saints is a term often used in connection with the men and women of the Bible. The term is misleading if it suggests that all the characters of the Scripture were without flaw, or even that any were wholly good. The best of men are but sinners saved by grace, and the Biblical word "saint" describes, not

a perfect man, but a dedicated man, a man who has lost himself in something beyond himself.

Thieves and prostitutes are not unknown to the pages of the Bible, which pictures also regicides, fratricides and suicides. There were those in Jesus' day who drew moral distinctions between themselves and others. He did not shun the reprobate, and the good people complained when they saw him eating with sinners. Jesus summoned all men to repent. To those proud of how much better they were than their fellows, he said: "the tax collectors and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matthew 21:31).

The Bible is a book of history, and its authors and editors tell us something of the historical method employed by them in bringing it to its present form. Not infrequently they name earlier sources to which they had access. The "Book of Jashar" (or the Righteous), cited in Joshua 10:13 and II Samuel 1:18, seems to have been a book of songs celebrating the glory of Israel. Numbers 21:14 refers to the "Book of the Wars of the Lord," perhaps another anthology in praise of heroes. I Kings 11:41 cites "the book of the acts of Solomon," based perhaps upon the official archives. There are references to "the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" (II Kings 1:18) and "the Book of the Chronicles

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of the Kings of Judah" (II Kings 8:23). I Chronicles 29:29 lists prophetic sources: "the Chronicles of Samuel the seer, . . . the Chronicles of Nathan the prophet, . . . the Chronicles of Gad the seer."

Luke 11:49 contains a quotation from a book called the "Wisdom of God." The activities of Jannes and Jambres, mentioned in II Timothy 3:8, were thought by some of the church fathers to have been described in a book by that title. Luke tells us in the preface of his Gospel (1:1-4) how he went about his work. In order to get at the truth of what happened during the ministry of Jesus, he interviewed eye-witnesses, consulted as many sources as he could, and then prepared "an orderly account." This is an accurate description of the procedure followed by the scientific historian of today.

◆§DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS EXPRESSED

In general, however, it was not followed by compilers of Biblical material. If they found two or more stories in circulation, they preferred not to investigate their origins or to iron out the discrep-

ancies but to keep them both. By succeeding generations, too, history was rewritten in the light of changed conditions. Some of the history written after the Hebrew nation broke in two reflects the point of view of Israel, the northern kingdom, some of it that of Judah, the southern. Much of it was done over in the light of the reform carried out under Josiah, reading back into an earlier time practices that represented purer worship. Still later, much of the material was reworked once more by those concerned with the developing importance of the priesthood. The variety of interests evident in these several strands provides us with fascinating data for the reconstruction of the history.

The religion of the Bible tells, not how man found God, but how God found man. The opening verse of I John, epitomizing the religion of the Bible, refers to that "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life." The Bible is the Word of Life, and here are indications of how powerfully that Word has been made manifest. In Christ it has become audible, visible, tangible.

It is a word "which we have heard." The Bible is the book in which God speaks to man. Jesus said to people: "Take heed then how you hear" (Luke 8:18)—a man must listen intently, discerningly, and with the determination at once to act upon truth recognized. Jesus also said: "Take heed what you hear" (Mark 4:24). "Take heed how you hear" is the kind of advice we might get from any priest, teacher, or public speaker. But "Take heed what you hear" is counsel such as Jesus only could give. He knows that we must put ourselves in the way of hearing the right things. This we do when we read the Bible. This is the book in which God speaks.

The Hebrews considered that a word once uttered had such continuing identity that it could not only be heard but seen (Revelation 1:12). So in Christ God's Word has been made visible: "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon." "Seen with our eyes" describes the experience the world has had of beholding the Person of Jesus of Nazareth during the days of his flesh. Looked upon is the term from which we get the English theater. We have not only seen a Person but have had the privilege of gazing upon a wondrous spectacle, God come down to earth.

The Word was not only audible and visible but tangible also—"which we have touched with our hands." God in Christ did not hold himself aloof from our human kind. A woman bathed his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair; another gained healing when she touched his garment in the crowd; a man planted a kiss upon his cheek. Thomas would not believe the Resurrection Gospel until some tangible evidence was offered. Jesus said: "Put your finger here, and see my hand; and put out your hand, and place it in my side" (John 20:27). "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see" (Luke 24:39). At a time when false teachers were saying that Jesus was a mere appearance, the New Testament insisted that he had been so real that men not only heard him and saw him but touched him, too. Ignatius said it was because the disciples had touched Christ that they were able to despise death.

Through preaching and the sacraments the church is kept continously aware of the audible, visible, tangible Word. So far as written documents go, it is only in the Bible that we are confronted with the living Word. Historians outside the company of believers had little occasion to notice Jesus. A cultist once argued from "the silence of secular historians" that "the story of Jesus Christ is fiction." But the secular historians are not quite so silent as he thought. Josephus, Suetonius, Tacitus, as well as the proconsul Pliny, have the kind of incidental references to Jesus which establish, from these sources alone, that he existed. The fact is, however, that

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these extra-Biblical sources really tell us nothing about the life and ministry and saving work of Jesus. That theological professor was right who used to say to his students: "If you would know Jesus, you must read your Gospels. There is no other way."





HE BIBLE IN ENGLISH

A COLORADO PARISHIONER DID NOT LIKE the version read in his church. "What I think you should use," he said to the pastor, "is the real Bible"—meaning some English version which was his favorite. "If you want the real Bible," said the minister, "that's what you'll get." The next Sunday he announced that the Scripture for the day was being read from the real Bible. Whereupon he read the Old Testament lesson in Hebrew, the New Testament in Greek.

When we speak of the Bible, we are apt to have in mind the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments

as translated into our own mother tongue. The Bible, however, is not an English book at all. Except for a few portions in Aramaic, the Old Testament is a Hebrew book; the New Testament is a Greek book.

The Protestant ideal is that everyone should read the real Bible. The Westminster Confession declares that the Hebrew and Greek originals are alone "authentical." For most of us, however, use of the Hebrew and Greek is not a possibility, and the Westminster Confession goes on to say: "They are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation."

The makers of the King James Version in their preface (unhappily omitted now from most editions) include theirs among "translations into the vulgar," and are at pains to point out that this "is not a quaint conceit lately taken up." This use of vulgar is a good illustration of how language changes. By it the men of the seventeenth century did not mean the language of the gutter, but rather the language in common use. One of the earliest and most influential of all Bible translations takes its name from the realization that it is only in this way that God's Word can be really effective. The Council of Trent declared the Latin Bible of Jerome to be the authoritative Scripture. This translation, made in the

latter part of the fourth century, is called the Vulgate, from the Latin word for "crowd."

The first considerable body of literature ever taken out of one language and put into another involved the Old Testament. Although the Jews were passionately fond of their homeland, many factors conspired to scatter them through other countries. Diaspora, the technical word for this scattering, suggests that their distribution was like the sowing of seed, flung here and there. In the third century B.C., the Jews living in Alexandria sent to Jerusalem for rabbis who would translate the sacred books into Greek, so that they and their children could have the Scriptures in the language they commonly used.

The rabbis took a dim view of the project. After all, was not Hebrew the language of heaven? Did not the angels speak Hebrew? Was not Hebrew God's native tongue? Nevertheless, the work was done; from the circumstance that it was reported to have been the work of seventy (Latin septuaginta) men, the translation was called the Septuagint. The New Testament writers regularly quote the Septuagint. That is why prophetic quotations appearing in the Gospels and Epistles are seldom identical with what we find in English Old Testaments translated directly from the Hebrew.

Since the Jews had not up to that time set limits

to their Scripture, the Septuagint contained some books not found in the Hebrew Bible. Called the Apocrypha, these books are considered as sacred by those who regard the Septuagint as authoritative. Luther placed them between the Testaments with the indication that, while "not held equal to the sacred Scriptures," they "nevertheless are useful and good to read." The Anglican Church assigns to them a similar significance.

When we think of how the Bible has come down to us in English, a line of James Russell Lowell takes on new meaning:

Slowly the Bible of the race is writ.

Attempts to put the Bible into our language are as old as our literature. Caedmon, the earliest English poet known by name, was famed for his paraphrases of Bible stories. In the eighth century, too, the Psalms were translated into Anglo-Saxon. The Venerable Bede, whose history is still a primary source

for knowledge of ancient English, died while dictating to his scribe a translation of John's Gospel. "I don't want my boys to read a lie," he said. In the ninth century, King Alfred prefixed to his own laws a translation of the Ten Commandments, and expressed the wish that all the freeborn youth of his kingdom should employ themselves on nothing till they read the Scripture. In the tenth century, the Gospels were translated, apparently for public use, and Archbishop Aelfric had interlinear translations prepared for his clergy.

The first complete English Bible (about 1382) was translated by John Wyclif, the morning star of the Reformation, and his friends. Wyclif knew only the Latin Bible, and so his version was a translation of a translation. Yet, with spelling modernized, some of his phrases still are ours: "the depe things of God"; "strait is the gate and narewe is the waye"; "the cup of blessing which we blessen." He gave us, too, the phrase truly, truly which in our most recent English Bible appears where verily, verily once stood. Wyclif helped to write Lincoln's Gettysburg address by stating in his preface that he had undertaken the arduous labor of translation because the Bible is "for the government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

The first English New Testament made from the

original Greek (1525) was the work of William Tyndale. The publication, a few years before, of Erasmus' Greek Testament made translation imperative, but the church authorities did not wish the people to have the Bible in English, and Tyndale was forbidden to proceed. When he went ahead anyway, the bishops referred to his work as a "heretical and damnable book." Because he had been forbidden to do the work in England, Tyndale went to the continent, where the work of Luther had won hospitality for such a venture. But when his work was published (printing had by this time been invented), it had to be smuggled into England, and Tyndale paid with his life for his devotion to the Bible. For no other crime than having given his own people the New Testament in the language they could understand, he was strangled and burned. We who can now buy Bibles so cheaply are sometimes unaware of the price that has been paid in human martyrdom and suffering that we should be enabled to read God's book in the English language.

Tyndale did more than any other individual to formulate our English religious vocabulary, and it is a safe guess that he wrote three quarters of our latest English Bible. His translation of Matthew 1:23 reads:

Beholde a mayde shall be with chylde, and shall brynge forthe a sonne, and they shall call his name Emanuel, which is by interpretation, God with us.

Tyndale's dying words were: "Oh Lord, open the King of England's eyes." God did open the eyes of Henry VIII. In 1535 there appeared a translation bearing the name of Miles Coverdale. Coverdale was Tyndale's friend and colleague, and the translation bearing his name was largely Tyndale's. In 1537, the second edition of Coverdale, the first English Bible printed in England appeared with these words on the title page: "Set forth with the Kynges moost gracious license." Some of Coverdale's renderings are memorable: "Is there no treacle in Gilead?" (Jeremiah 8:22); "broke his brain-panne" (Judges 9:53); "Ther widows were not looked upon in the daylie handreaching" (Acts 6:1).

≈§BY

ROYAL

DECREE

Great Bible (so-called from its size) was the name given to the Tyndale-Coverdale rendering when it

was permanently embodied in 1539 in what has come to be known as the first authorized version. A royal decree required that a copy be "set up in a convenient place" in every church in the kingdom. This Bible is still much used. The Prayer Book of the Anglican Church took its Psalter and its Lord's Prayer from this version. Anyone who uses the "trespasses" version of the Lord's Prayer is quoting the Great Bible.

Though never authorized, the next English Bible was one of the most important. In the Roman Catholic rule of Queen Mary, English exiles in Switzerland made a translation to which was given the name *Geneva Bible*. The first English version to have verse divisions, this became the Bible of Cromwell's army and the Scottish Covenanters, of John Bunyan and John Knox. It is the Bible of the Puritans, and the Bible which the Pilgrims brought to the bleak New England shore.

By 1568, ecclesiastical opposition to vernacular Bibles had pretty well subsided, and the church authorities issued their own translation, the second authorized version, the Bishops' Bible. This was the official Bible of the Shakespearean era. Its most lasting influence was an unhappy one. In thirty-two instances which Tyndale correctly rendered by *love*, it uses *charity*. The third authorized version was the King James, of 1611.

Coming up to 1856, the motion was made in the Convocation of Canterbury that work be started on a new translation of the Bible. The discovery of old manuscripts made this imperative; the English Revision, started in 1870, was published in 1881-5. Of this, the American Standard was a variant. The fifth authorized English Bible is the Revised Standard Version, 1946 (New Testament), 1952 (Old and New Testaments), and 1957 (Apocrypha).

Official Bibles are not the work of one individual or one church. When the English Revision was undertaken, the project, initiated by the established church, was set up so as "to invite the cooperation of any, eminent for scholarship, to whatever nation or religious body they may belong." The committee did include Baptist, Congregationalist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Unitarian, as well as Anglican members. An invitation for Roman Catholics to participate was declined. On the American side, the committee included members of nine denominations.

Regarding official versions we have used the word authorized. What does authorized mean in this connection and who does the authorizing? A brief answer might be, the highest ecclesiastical authority. In the Anglican church, the highest authority is the British monarch. As life is organized in England, the reigning king or queen is head of the church as

well as of the state. Since the Church of England is the established religion, Bibles authorized in England go out with the approval of king or queen.

The monarch grants this, not because of any unique moral authority, but because of ecclesiastical position. The first authorized English version, the Great Bible, was authorized by the gross and ruthless ruler, Henry VIII, who "murdered" two wives, divorced two, and had two others—and authorized a Bible for the glory of God. The Bishops' Bible was authorized in the reign of Elizabeth I; the King James in the reign of "God's silly vassal," James VI of Scotland, James I of England.

In the United States the highest ecclesiastical authority is the denominational assembly. More than thirty American denominations, representing a membership of some thirty-eight million people, have banded themselves together in the National Council of Churches. Through the Council, the churches do together those things which can be done better cooperatively than separately. One of these is the translation of the Bible. In authorizing the Revised Standard Version, the Denver Assembly referred to it as "a major contribution of this Council to prophetic religion." A British theologian has described it as "a symbol of all that is best in American life."

The question is sometimes asked as to whether all these translations may not result in our getting farther and farther from the truth. To that there are two very good answers. One is that the Protestant Church, as noted earlier, is committed to the Hebrew and Greek originals as alone authoritative. Living language changes, and with amazing rapidity. But the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures do not change. This is something to which the church can cling in confidence.

GREAT ORIGINAL
PROCLAIM

Every age has its translators who do what Addison said the "spangled heavens" do:

Their great Original proclaim.

The second answer is that, in God's good providence, we know more about those originals than earlier generations did. Archaeological finds, accidental discoveries of old documents, new information about the Biblical languages, enable our

generation to say, with no sense of pride or boasting:

I have more understanding than all my teachers....
I understand more than the aged.

(Psalm 119:99, 100)

The only Bible known during the middle ages was the Latin Bible. The Reformation began when the church rediscovered the original. From the Greek Testament edited by Erasmus, Luther discovered that Jesus did not say "Do penance" but "Repent." The Great Awakening is traced to the Holy Club at Oxford. That was the group in which John and Charles Wesley and others began to read the Greek Testament for themselves. The church is never so original as when it confronts its origins—and this the Bible enables us to do continuously.

Until the invention of printing, all Bibles were copied by hand. Since perfection is denied us mortals, copyists made mistakes, so that in effect each separate copy became a separate edition. Of the Bibles that have survived from before the age of printing, no two are identical. In spite of passing so often through the hands of fallible men, all great doctrines have come through with remarkable soundness. Some of them we understand now better

than our fathers did, because manuscript discoveries of the last hundred years take us back a thousand years nearer the time of Christ and his apostles than seventeenth-century translators were able to get.

Bibles in the seventeenth century had this version of Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Third century papyrus leaves disclose that the true reading is: "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him." Earlier versions made I John 4:19 read: "We love him, because he first loved us." Correct rendering of the original confronts us with a much grander truth: "We love, because he first loved us." Medieval scribes made Jesus say: "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:22). The old manuscripts reveal that he said a much sterner thing: "Every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment."

In the Revised Standard Version, at these and many other places, the true reading is preserved. In that sense, our latest English Bible is really our earliest. "The great new fact of our time," as William Temple called it, is the movement through which Christians of many communions are being drawn more closely together. This has come about in no small measure because the scholars of every com-

munion have found themselves, in the earnest study of the Bible, drawn into closer fellowship and understanding with the scholars of other communions.

Earlier English Bibles have a misleading picture of the unity Christ envisioned for his church. At John 10:16 some versions read: "There shall be one fold, and one shepherd." A fold is a stone enclosure within which the sheep are kept safe from the wind and the wolves. There are some whose idea of church unity is like that: everybody crowded behind the same fence. This, however, is not the picture that our Lord painted. The Revised Standard Version gives a correct translation of the Greek: "So there shall be one flock, one shepherd." The flock may be bedded down in many folds. It derives its unity, not from a common enclosure but from its common Lord, "the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (I Peter 2:25).

This kind of oneness was exemplified in those appointed by the churches to make this translation. The Standard Bible Committee has had on its membership Southern Baptists and American Baptists; Episcopalians, both high church and low; Lutherans; Methodists; Congregationalists; Presbyterians; and Friends. The Old Testament section included a Jewish scholar who brought to the work a living knowledge of the Hebrew language and tradition

that would otherwise have had to be dug from lexicons and encyclopedias.

It is significant that no vote in the Standard Bible Committee ever proceeded along denominational lines. Presbyterian never lined up against Baptist, nor Quaker against Anglican. The sole concern was to find out what the original said and transmit it faithfully, a Bible for all the church. With regard to Bible study they would approve the saying of Bishop Stevens: "Don't study it with your little red light of Methodism or your little blue light of Presbyterianism, or the light of the Episcopal Church, but just the light of Calvary."



HE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE

It is but an accident of language that the two parts of the Bible are not called the "old covenant" and the "new covenant." Among us the word testament most often occurs in the legal phrase, "the last will and testament." The distinctively Christian addition to the Hebrew Scriptures is not the dying counsel of Jesus. It represents rather the fulfillment of a promise found in Jeremiah 31:31, 33: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts." The old covenant, given when God took his people "by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt," consisted

basically of rules for the wise ordering of life, with punishments attached to violation of the various prohibitions.

The new covenant was one of grace; its distinctive message was: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." The old covenant was delivered when Moses was lost to sight on a cloud-covered mountain. The new covenant was proclaimed when Jesus "went up on the mountain," sat down in plain view of his disciples, and "opened his mouth and taught them." The old covenant was written upon tables of stone. The new covenant was conveyed to men by act and deed in such a way that one could say to Christians in a pagan city: "You are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (II Corinthians 3:3).

There are three major divisions of the Old Testament. Luke 24:44 represents Jesus as indicating that all three found their completion in him: "Everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." The earliest section of the Old Testament to have been formally recognized as Scripture was the Law. The title "Books of Moses" indicates books dealing with the work of Moses rather than books by Moses.

These five books of the Law contain the work of many people at many different times.

Genesis, the book of beginnings, tells of man created in the image of God, and of sin, which early brought estrangement; of the beginnings of the arts and crafts that make up civilization; of the origins of the Hebrew race; of how the Hebrews came to be slaves in Egypt. Exodus describes the great deliverance from that bondage. Leviticus makes provision for worship and civil order to be carried out under the direction of the priests. Numbers tells of the people who fled from Egypt and of their wearisome marches in the desert. Deuteronomy is a restatement of Israel's system of national religion; ancient laws and customs are interpreted in the light of universal human concern.

PROPHETS

The second category of Old Testament books is "the prophets"—a much more inclusive listing than might be supposed. The distinction we sometimes make between major and minor prophets is not that familiar to the Hebrews. They spoke about the for-

mer prophets and the latter prophets. The former prophets include the books which we ordinarily think of as historical, while the twelve "minor"—or shorter—prophets are included by the Hebrews in the latter prophets as but a single book.

The former prophets include Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, and I and II Kings. Since books describing the conquest of Canaan, the rule of the judges, and the kings of Israel are referred to as the former prophets, this helps us to understand the true nature of prophecy. Our English prophet transliterates a Greek word meaning "one who speaks for another." The prophets were men who spoke for God. Sometimes what they spoke had to do with the past, sometimes it had to do with the present, sometimes it had to do with the future. The prophets interpreted the past, gave direction for the present, and revealed what might be expected to happen in the future. But whether dealing with the past, the present, or the future, a prophet was distinguished by the forthright way in which he proclaimed the mind of God.

From the hills of Moab, Moses gazed upon the Promised Land, but was not permitted to enter it. Joshua was his successor, and the book of Joshua describes how the Hebrew people, with him as leader, took possession of the land that was to be

their inheritance. Recent archaeological finds have done much to clarify the conquests which here are so tersely described. Students now believe that the Hebrews took over the land of Canaan, not by a single swift campaign, but by successive waves of invasion.

The work of the latter prophets appears in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve. Isaiah proclaims the holiness of God, whose righteous nature now manifests itself in judgment upon the nations, and will manifest itself in the coming of the Prince of Peace. Jeremiah proclaims that true religion is personal rather than national—and whatever is personal is universal. Ezekiel, shepherd and priest to his people, sets forth a sacramental view of life, through which regeneration may come to his people.

When we remember the special emphases of the Twelve, the wonder grows that anyone should have thought them "minor." Amos proclaimed God's demand that "justice roll down like waters, and right-eousness like an ever-flowing stream." Hosea is the earliest evangelist, first prophet of God's transcending love. Micah rebukes oppressors of the poor. Nahum announces that God's judgment upon every form of wickedness is about to manifest itself in the doom of Nineveh. Zephaniah declares that "The

great day of the Lord is near . . . a day of wrath . . . a day of ruin and devastation."

At a time when tragedy and disaster were multiplied, Habbakuk affirmed that "the righteous shall live by his faith." Obadiah, in the manner of the ancient warriors, sings a song of triumph over defeated foes. Malachi was sure that the troubles of his time could be cured by better homes, purer worship, closer attention to the Law. Jonah proclaimed that God's love includes even Ninevites. Joel looks forward to the time when God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. Haggai encourages the returning exiles in the rebuilding of the temple. Glad to see the temple rebuilt, Zechariah reminded his people that religion must manifest itself also in the common life.

The final category of Old Testament scripture is referred to in Ecclesiasticus as "the other books of our fathers" and "the rest of the books." Later literary works which religious experience deemed helpful were loosely grouped together as "the writings." Jesus referred to them as "the psalms." The Psalter was the best-known and best-loved work in this collection, and hence can be singled out as representative of the whole. Another poetic work included here is the Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon, a collection of lyrics celebrating the won-

ders of romantic love. Another poetic book is of a very different sort: Lamentations is not so much lyric poetry as elegiac. In this book an unnamed poet (or poets) sings of the terrible plight of King Zedekiah and his party who tried by night to escape from the besieged and starving city of Jerusalem when the troops of Nebuchadnezzar overtook them.

AND FAITH

CONDENSED"

Besides these three poetic works, the writings included what we know as the wisdom literature: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes—though pessimism is a better word than wisdom to describe the third, and Job might well be listed as poetic drama. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes could be classed as didactic poetry. One characteristic of present-day versions of the Bible is a printer's format which enables us to recognize that such books as Lamentations, Job, and Ecclesiastes are cast in the poetic form. The slogan of the Texas Council for the Promotion of Poetry might be used as a caption for these books: "Poetry

is wisdom and faith condensed in a mood of wonder and compassion."

Works of history are found, too, among the writings. I and II Chronicles retell in somewhat glorified fashion events related in earlier narratives. Compare, for example, II Samuel 24:24 with I Chronicles 21:25. Ezra and Nehemiah tell of the return from exile and the rebuilding that followed. The historical romance, too, was used by the Hebrews for the glory of God. Esther describes how a beautiful Jewish maiden and her designing uncle gained commanding position at the court of the Persian King Ahasuerus, or Xerxes; the story is still read in synagogues as a part of the Purim celebration. The idyllic Book of Ruth was written to protest the narrow exclusiveness which led Ezra, upon the return from exile, to order all Jews to put away foreign wives. Finally, the Book of Daniel was included in the writings. Ofter referred to as one of the minor prophets, it was written too late to be included even among the latter prophets.

Jesus seems to have been especially fond of the Psalms, and their phraseology sounded at critical periods of his life. The voice at his baptism, "This is my beloved Son," used the words of Psalm 2:7. The tempter spoke in terms of Psalm 91:11: "He will give his angels charge of you." The cry from

the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) is really the opening words of Psalm 22. This expression of loneliness and desolation is seen in different light when we remember that the whole Psalm was no doubt in his mind. We think of the Beatitudes as distinctive of the ministry of Jesus, and no collection of them quite equals that found in Matthew; yet scattered through the Psalms there are some twenty beatitudes. Probably it was Jesus' own familiarity with the latter which led him to cast part of his teaching in that mold.

We have Jesus' own word for it that he came to fulfill the law, the prophets, and the writings. We are entitled to distinguish two kinds of fulfillment. One is a mere verbal similarity between circumstances in the life of Jesus and what the Old Testament might be made to say. Ezekiel 44:2 describes a voice which the prophet heard in his vision of the sanctuary. Yet Roman Catholic theologians solemnly cite it in support of the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Of quite a different order are the grand ideas of the Old Testament which Jesus consciously and deliberately sought to fulfill. Driving the money-changers from the temple, he cited Isaiah 56:7: "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." This occurs in a

passage descriptive of how foreigners are to be brought to God's holy mountain and made joyful in his temple. Jesus' protest evidently is not only against the crass commercialism which had invaded the sacred precincts, but also against the narrow exclusiveness which held that only Jewish money proffered by Jews was acceptable there.

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BATTLE-CHARGER

Entering the city where he was to die, Jesus proclaimed his Kingship by his choice of animal for the triumphal ride. Kings bent on conquest rode on battle-chargers. The King chooses a lowly beast of burden. This is prophecy fulfilled in the grand manner. It is a moving experience to read Isaiah 53 and consider how it was fulfilled in the life and the work of one who "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Through the ministry, the sorrows, and the triumph over death by Jesus of Nazareth, the new covenant was gloriously confirmed, and the New Testament proclaims the mighty deeds of him "who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Timothy 1:10). After the defection of Judas, the disciples made choice of another to fill out the apostolic company. The one who would be picked, they said, "must become with us a witness to his resurrection" (Acts 1:22). The New Testament is given to proclaim the good news that although Jesus was "crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men . . . God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it" (Acts 2:23, 24).

If the books of our English New Testament were arranged in order of origin, the letters of Paul would come first. Paul was a missionary whose life was completely bound up with the life of his converts: "For now we live," he wrote to the people of a city called Salonika, "if you stand fast in the Lord" (I Thessalonians 3:8). Absent from his friends, he felt as if he had been orphaned (I Thessalonians 2:17 in Greek). It was to keep in touch with his converts and the friends in the churches he had founded that he began to write. The letters he sent are not, for the most part, theological treatises, but answers to specific situations. Each of his letters flies straight to the heart of a crisis.

To Thessalonians, troubled that the expected end of the age had not transpired, Paul wrote that, for

those who died in the meantime, they should "not grieve as others do who have no hope"; rather, all were "to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living." When the Galatian churches were in danger of introducing racial distinctions, Paul wrote that in Christ: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, . . . neither slave nor free . . . neither male nor female." The Corinthian letters reveal the heart of Paul as pastor, dealing with the problems of living the Christian life in a pagan community. The letter to Romans, dealing with sin and grace, is the nearest thing we have to a systematic exposition of the Apostle's belief.

Four letters are called prison epistles. Ephesians contemplates the wonders which God in Christ has wrought in and through the church. Heresies began early, and Colossians demonstrates the absurdity of the secret cult, the futility of ascetic practices, the all-sufficiency of Christ. Philemon deals slavery its death blow by insisting that a slave-owner take back his runaway slave, "no longer as a slave but as a beloved brother." Philippians, abounding in evidence of the affection that existed between a missionary and his converts, has been called Paul's love letter.

All the letters of Paul were in circulation before a single gospel attained its present form. Mark, the

earliest, seems to have been based upon the witness which Peter bore; so much of it is given over to the last week of Jesus' life that it has been called "a narrative of our Lord's Passion, with an introduction." Matthew supplements Mark with a great body of teaching material, grouped as five discourses (Chs. 5:3 to 7:27; 10; 13; 18; 24 and 25); this gospel appears first in our English New Testament because its frequent references to the Old Testament make it a fitting transition to the New.

Luke, too, took over Mark's outline; to it he adds so many songs of the nativity that he has been called "the man who gave us Christmas." In the framework of a travel narrative, depicting Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, he adds parables demonstrating God's love for all sorts of people, making this the universal Gospel. The Acts of the Apostles, the earliest work in church history, is Luke's second volume. Outlined in 1:8, it tells of the worship and fellowship and rearranged common life which resulted from the Spirit's outpouring. John 20:31 tells why the fourth Gospel was written: "That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you have life in his name."

Further writings appeared in response to further needs. Three other letters are attributed to Paul: I and II Timothy and Titus. Concerned with prob-

lems of church government and administration, they are known as the pastoral epistles. Though the formal organization seems to reflect a later time, they appear to be expansions by his associates of instructions sent by the Apostle to younger colleagues.

Letters bearing the name of Paul are addressed either to designated congregations or to individuals. The New Testament contains other messages addressed to believers everywhere and called general (or catholic, which means the same thing) letters. The epistolary form is often only nominal, and many of these appear to be either intended for oral instruction of new Christians or for sermon notes for the deeply moving messages by which their authors bore their witness.

STRENGTH
FOR THE
PERSECUTED

I Peter tells those persecuted for the faith that the "fiery ordeal" is not to be thought strange: "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps." The letter of James discloses the new problems that arose when the

church, which began among fishermen, started to make its way among the well-to-do. The letter to Hebrews is sure that anything which can be done by Moses or angels or priests, Jesus can do better. II Peter and Jude vividly depict the danger from false prophets and the plight of the wavering. Three letters bear the name of John. I John treats of forgiveness that overcomes sin and love that casts out fear. II John discloses that false teachers had been going from house to house spreading evil ideas. III John reveals how overbearing individuals were trying to arrogate power to themselves.

Apocalypse was a literary form as characteristic of the Hebrews as drama was of the Greeks. Time is foreshortened, and in conventional imagery drawn from the realm of nature. God's ultimate triumph over his foes is dramatically portrayed. Though not the last book to have been written, our Bible fittingly comes to its close with an apocalypse. Apocalypse is a Greek word meaning "revelation." It is important to note that Scripture concludes with revelation rather than with obfuscation. Revelation is intended to reveal, rather than to baffle or confuse. Addressed to Christians undergoing persecution and martyrdom, Revelation encourages the believer to be steadfast by picturing a cosmic conflict in which the outcome is no longer in doubt. The

The Message of the Bible

issue has been settled. It is the Lamb and not the lion that triumphs.

Although several times insisting that it is dealing with things immediately at hand, Revelation has always been regarded by the church as picturing in symbolic form the final victory of right over wrong.

Frank Lloyd Wright, describing the architect's ideal of the city that is to be, says it will be "iridescent by day, luminous by night . . . woven of rich glass. . . . Such a city would clean itself in the rain, would know no fire alarm nor any gloom." This sounds like something out of Revelation. "Iridescent by day," he writes, "luminous by night." The Seer says: "Night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun." "Woven of rich glass," says Mr. Wright. "Clear as crystal," says the author of Revelation. Such a city, says Mr. Wright, would know no gloom. "Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more," says Revelation. Is Frank Lloyd Wright among the apocalyptists? Let us say rather that even for dwellers in the twentieth century the Bible still spells out man's dreams better than man can do himself.





OW TO READ THE BIBLE

PROTESTANTISM RESTS UPON THE CONVICTION that each believer has not only the right, but also the duty and the privilege, "with inward illumination of the Holy Spirit," to hear God speaking to him through the Scripture. The Bible is not an easy book to read, and private judgment is not to be exercised in isolation. Yet nowhere else is such "promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

The theme of the Bible is the great and steadfast love of God. It reaches its climax in Greek words which in English become four monosyllables: "God was in Christ" (II Corinthians 5:19). When reading the Bible, Martin Luther said, "Take Christ with

you, for he is the man whom everything concerns." The Old Testament looks forward to the Messiah's coming. The New Testament proclaims that he who is to come has come, and that all the forces of darkness and death have no dominion over him.

◆§HOW TO BEGIN READING THE BIBLE

Since the Bible is supremely a book about Christ, it is important to begin with those sections which tell what he did when he was here among men.

Mark, earliest and shortest of the Gospels, ought to be read first—and at a single sitting. Here we are confronted at once by "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).

Luke's account should be read next, noting Jesus' concern for all sorts of people, and how, by teaching and example, he "went about doing good."

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John

Follow this with John's Gospel, wherein the life that was in Christ becomes the light of men. By this time one will have become aware that Jesus appears on the scene only after a long period of preparation for his coming. In Mark there are references to Moses and Isaiah and Elijah. Luke mentions David and Elisha and Jonah, as well as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. John talks of "a ruler of the Jews," and of the search for the Messiah. It is evident that the New Testament presupposes the long history of the Jewish people and that the Gospel emerges from an organized religious community.

Matthew

But Matthew's unique approach needs next to be read. Here are references to Babylon, Zebulon and Naphtali, Sodom and Gomorrah, reminders of a history that took place upon a very real earth.

We shall want next to follow the fortunes of the new community which Jesus established. Acts

In Acts, we find Peter, James, and John giving leadership to the beloved community, which was powerfully reinforced by the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who had been "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1). Christ's appearance to Saul gave to the early church a new man, Paul, who became its most indefatigable traveler, its ablest organizer, its first witness to take pen in hand.

Paul's
Letters

After Acts, it is natural to turn to Paul's letters. After you read of Paul's visit to Thessalonica (the modern Salonika), Galatia, Corinth, Philippi, read the letters he subsequently wrote to the congregations he left in these regions. Sometimes his influence resulted in establishing churches in communities to which he himself had not come; residents of Colossae heard him during his long stay in Ephesus. The letters to Philemon and Colossians should be read in this connection. Paul's thoughts about the church are summarized in

the letter we know as Ephesians. To the believers in Rome Paul wrote his understanding of the Gospel long before he himself had a chance to go to the capital of empire. It is clear that he envisioned a kingdom greater by far than that ruled by Caesars.

Other Letters Titus and I and II Timothy reveal the forms of organization and government which developed in the ever-expanding church. The preaching of other leaders, too, is found in letters that bear the names of Peter, James, John, and Jude, and in the work of the unnamed writer who addresses himself to the Hebrews.

The Bible has introduced us now to "our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light" (II Timothy 1:10), to the church he founded and the men who were with him, to the congregations they established, to the problems of growth and discipline they encountered, and the message they proclaimed.

Old Testament We are ready now to explore at greater length the Old Testament to which so many allusions have been made. For the Christian, the New Testament should be his guide to the Old. Obtain a harmony of the Gospels showing Mark, Matthew, and Luke in parallel columns, with footnote references to Old Testament passages cited by the gospel writers. Note first all the prophets that are referred to: Isaiah, Micah, Hosea, Jeremiah, Malachi, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, Zachariah, I and II Kings, I and II Samuel. Having read an introduction to each book and having noted the way it is used in the Gospel, ask yourself continually what contribution it makes to the idea of the Kingdom of God and its Messiah, and how the book appears to have been regarded by Jesus himself. Then read the other prophetic books. Do they differ in emphasis from those Jesus quoted? Do they introduce other ideas regarding the Kingdom?

The Law of Moses

Having noted how Jesus fulfilled the prophets, read next the books in which the Law of Moses is set forth: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Again by consulting the footnotes, consider how these books are dealt with in the Gospels, and especially the contrast between Jesus and Moses implied in Matthew 5:21-48.

The "writings"

Read next the "writings," observing once more allusions to them in the gospels. Note how Ruth figures in the genealogy of our Lord, and how Luke 11:30 differs from Matthew 12:40 in its understanding of Jonah's true significance. A special exploration should be made of the Psalms and of their influence upon Jesus.

Genesis:
Book of
Beginnings

The prologue to John's Gospel thrusts Christ's significance clear back into the eternal counsels of God. Its opening words, "In the beginning," are no doubt in conscious imitation of the Old Testament book of beginnings. It is time now for us to read Genesis. Its

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stories of human origins enable us to appreciate the New Testament doctrine, "If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation" (II Corinthians 5:17). Genesis introduces us to Abraham, who is cited by both Paul and James to illustrate the meaning of faith. Yet so great is the difference that Christ has made in everything that Paul can describe the era before his coming as the time "before faith came" (Galatians 3:23).

Revelation

We have made the acquaintance now of most of the books of the Bible and have seen something of their interrelationship. The Christian begins with the New Testament. The Old Testament, in turn, adds meaning to the New. But again this is not simply a circular relationship. It goes somewhere, and we turn finally to the last book in the Bible. The reading of Daniel and Ezekiel has made us familiar with the type of imagery which we find in Revelation. And we see now how a Christian writer has caught up

the well-recognized figures of apocalyptic vision, and made them spell out encouragement for the persecuted Christians. In so doing he uttered a word which in every age rings in the believer's ear: "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

eβ"UNSEARCHING RICHES"

Plain as the main theme of the Bible may by this time have become, the Scripture nevertheless contains "unsearchable riches" (Ephesians 3:8—the Greek here says riches that cannot be tracked down), and so is worthy of all the erudition we may bring to it. What helps are needed? First, a dictionary. Anyone who wishes to understand the English Bible must study such words as faith, atonement, reconcilation, grace, salvation. A concordance will enable him to look up Biblical words in all the contexts in which they occur. A commentary will provide introductions to the several books and help with more difficult passages. Excellent one-volume commen-

taries providing notes on the entire Bible are available.

The student of music, art, or drama will find his own specialty helping him to appreciate the Book which has inspired and informed the creative impulse in so many realms. The linguist will find foreign language versions of the Bible enriching his understanding. An atlas of Bible lands will enable the student to trace ancient migrations, note the proximity of the Hebrews to neighboring nations, and follow Paul's incessant itineration. Biblical geography and archaeology serve as commentary on the morning paper, too, since new discoveries are continually being made, and life lived in Bible lands is still exciting.

Light comes from study when we are able to put ourselves in the situation out of which the Scriptures came. It is helpful to use what one theologian called "the five P's of the Bible." In dealing with each section we are to find out, in so far as possible, the person by whom written, the person to whom written, the place from which written, the period at which written, the purpose for which written.

Illustration of the urgency of these points is found in I Corinthians 14:34, a passage sometimes cited in opposition to the ordination of women. If we inquire only as to the person by whom it was written, we might even infer that Paul didn't like women. But the people to whom written, the period at which written, and the purpose for which written must receive full consideration.

The "people to whom written" were the Corinthians. This is not the way Paul talks in his other letters. Affixed to the letter to Romans is a letter of commendation for a woman-"our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae." This letter includes expressions of warm remembrance to several women who are described as "workers in the Lord." The tenderest of all Paul's letters, Philippians, was written to a church founded by a woman, and the Apostle says: "help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel." It is evident that what Paul says about women in Corinth is different from what he says about them in other cities. Why? The period at which written was one in which ritual prostitution was a regular part of the cult of Aphrodite, localized at Corinth. The purpose for which written plainly was, not to lay down a rule that would be permanent and universal, but to keep Christianity from being misunderstood in the midst of a pagan society.

As we study the Bible in this fashion, we must keep ever in mind that it comes from a land and time other than our own. Not infrequently we en-

counter an idea expressed in oriental imagery, which needs to be translated into the idiom of our age and country. "What man of you," said Jesus, "if his son asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?" A missionary reports that when he translated that literally into the language of a Bulu tribe, it didn't make sense. The Bulus don't like fish; they are fond of serpents. In order therefore to preserve the point, the missionary had to make it read: "What man of you, if his son asks for a serpent, will give him a centipede?" Ecumenical history is replete with such situations.

Nor should we expect the Bible to say the same thing in all its parts. Many and varied were the ways in which "God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Hebrews 1:1).

TO

THE GOSPEL

The Decalogue is basic to many things in our society. Nevertheless, the Ten Commandments are simply preparatory to the Gospel, and the New Testament often goes far beyond them. The fourth

commandment requires the seventh day to be kept holy. But worship in the New Testament takes place on the first day. It celebrates our Lord's victory over death, and every Sunday is a Day of Resurrection.

The fifth commandment requires that children obey their parents, with the promise of long life to those who carry out this filial duty. Luke 2:51 tells that Jesus came with Mary and Joseph "to Nazareth, and was obedient to them." But Jesus did not live to a ripe old age. The Old Testament reflects a patriarchal society and is strong on the duties which children owe to their parents. The New Testament does not say that children owe unqualified obedience to their parents but only that they are to obey them "in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1). Moreover, the New Testament indicates that the obligations here are not one-sided. Parents have obligations, too: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

The eighth commandment says: "You shall not steal." Americans have found in this a safeguard to the rights of private property. But Ephesians 4:23 proposes a different motive for the end of thievery: "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands so that he may be able to give to those in need."

We must remember again that this is God's word to us. Some say that the reason we do not learn more than we do about God is, not that we don't know enough, but that we aren't good enough. In John 7:17 Jesus says: "If any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God." In Genesis 3:9 there is the question: "Where are you?" This is not merely a query which God put to Adam in the Garden. Adam is every man, and God is asking us, "Where are you?" Are you trying to run away from God?

Isaiah heard God say: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8). This is not simply a divine summons to an ancient courtier that he should follow a prophetic career. It is a cry that rings in the ears of every youth who must decide which way his life will go.

When Jesus invited himself home with the collector of internal revenue, Zaccheaus exclaimed: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." To what actions are we impelled when salvation comes to our house? If we accept God's love and forgiveness, to whom must we show love and forgiveness?

✓§AN

UNFINISHED

BOOK

The truth thus apprehended becomes to each of us "the word of life." There is a sense in which the Bible is an unfinished book. Various parts of it conclude on a note of breathless expectancy. The Old Testament ends with the hope that the Prophet Elijah will come with power to reconcile the older and younger generations. The best texts of Mark's Gospel break off abruptly with a description of the "trembling and astonishment" which had come upon the first witnesses of the Resurrection. Luke's second volume terminates suddenly with Paul, under house detention in Rome, preaching "quite openly and unhindered."

What came after that? Was Paul released from his imprisonment? Did he go on other journeys, found other churches, write other letters? The inspired writer has chosen to leave this and other questions unanswered, not in the manner of the soap opera, which concludes each day's episode with somebody hanging on a cliff, but with the thought that the acts of the Apostles are never at an end. Every genera-

tion has its own apostles writing new chapters in the ever-unfolding history of the church.

What happened at Bethlehem, Nazareth, Cana, Jericho, and Golgotha will not be repeated. "The death he died he died to sin, once for all" (Romans 6:10). Yet the same passage goes on to say: "the life he lives he lives to God," and the New Testament uses the present tense to describe his continued coming into our human life. He is the Lamb of God who is taking away the sins of the world (John 1:29). He did not promise that his followers would say greater things than he said, but he did say: "He who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than them will he do, because I go to the Father" (John 14:12). Jesus bequeathed to the world nothing of interest to the probate court, but he did leave to the church his Spirit.

That Spirit, he promised, would not only "bring to your remembrance all that I have said," but will "teach you all things" (John 14:26) and "guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). Persecuted men in our time, dragged before governors and kings for his sake, have proved the truth of his promise that they need have no fear, "for what you are to say will be given you in that hour" (Matthew 10:18). When thought of from this point of view, the closing words of John's Gospel are not pious exaggeration but

sober fact: "These are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25).

The message of the Bible is that the God of history is Lord of the church and Savior of men. The God who was in Christ continues to come into human life through his Spirit. That Spirit is not simply the impulse of our own hearts but the Spirit of Christ. Because it keeps us ever in touch with him whom to know is the life of the ages (John 17:3), the Bible is basic to the life of the church. The church now is Christ's body; William Temple called it the extension of the Incarnation. I Peter 1:12 represents God as doing for his church things which the angels envy.

The Bible is to be studied in the context of the church. It is a history of what God has done in and through the church. Yet it is an unfinished history, and through it man has still to learn "the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3:18). The Bible therefore is a book not only for all times, all places, all peoples, but also for all worlds. It belongs not only to the world that has been, and to the world that now is, but also to the world that is to be. Man's venture into outer space may lend

new meaning to God's purpose, expressed in the Bible, "that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:10).

APPENDIX

The Bible In American Life

THE REAL INFLUENCE of the Bible cannot be measured. It is to be reckoned only in terms of hearts that have been lifted up, decisions that have been made in good conscience, careers that have been changed, and men and women who, in response to its imperious demands, have done justice and loved kindness and walked humbly with God.

The very discovery of America was, in a sense, due to the belief of Christopher Columbus that II Esdras 6:42 could be used as a geographical guide: "On the third day thou didst command the waters to be gathered together in the seventh part of the earth; six parts thou didst dry up and keep so some of them might be planted and cultivated." From this the ex-

The Bible in American Life

plorer reasoned that there could not be much ocean to separate him from the land of his dreams.

The King James Bible, published in 1611, was in existence when the Pilgrims came, but the version they brought was the Geneva Bible of 1560. This was the Bible of Cromwell and Knox, of Spenser and Shakespeare. The first volume printed in America was the Bay Psalm Book, a metrical version of the Psalter issued in New England only twenty years after the Mayflower came.

Though English was to be the language of the colonies, the first two Bibles published in the new world were in other languages. The first complete Scripture published on these shores was an Indian Bible, John Eliot's translation into the language of one of the Massachusetts tribes. His New Testament was published in 1661, the entire Bible in 1663. The second Bible published in America was a German Bible, printed in 1743 on the press which Christopher Sower had established at Germantown, Pennsylvania.

The first English Bible printed in America was the Atkins Bible, edited by Robert Atkins. This appeared in 1782, and in the same year Congress passed a resolution calling for its use. The founding fathers inscribed on the Liberty Bell words from Leviticus

25:10: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."

In 1803, Thomas Jefferson purchased copies of the New Testament in English, Greek, Latin, and French, and constructed for himself a harmony of the Gospels from which he was accustomed to read each night before retiring. The first Bible translation made into English in America was the work of Charles Thomson, secretary of the Continental Congress, who, in 1808, published his own rendering of the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament.

Benjamin Franklin believed that if the Bible were to hold the place in our national life which it ought, "the turn of the phrase and expression should be modern." He made some suggestions as to how this could be brought about. Noah Webster wished to be remembered neither for his blue-back speller nor for his dictionary but for his "Holy Bible with Amendments." Attempting to make the grammar and vocabulary conform to American idiom, he anticipated at many points the work of official revisers.

It is customary for our presidents to take the oath of office with a hand upon the Scripture. Some unusual Bibles have figured in these ceremonies. Franklin D. Roosevelt used his family's copy of the Staten Bijbel. This translation into Dutch was completed in 1637; the Roosevelt copy, from the edition of 1686,

The Bible in American Life

is printed in Gothic type, bound in half-inch boards covered by embossed leather, and held shut by brass clamps.

For President Truman's second—and only real—inaugural, friends prepared a facsimile of the Gutenberg Bible, first volume made from movable type in the Western world. This now reposes in the Truman Library at Independence, Missouri. On one page Mr. Truman has written: "I placed my left hand on this twentieth chapter of Exodus January 20, 1949, when I took the oath of office." The passage referred to is the one that contains the Ten Commandments.

When General Eisenhower was elected president, Adlai Stevenson sent a telegram saying: "That you may be the servant and guardian of peace and make the dale of trouble a door of hope is my earnest prayer." Making "the dale of trouble a door of hope" is a quotation from James Moffatt's translation of Hosea 2:15. The original reference was to a narrow pass where, after rain, a small stream becomes a foaming torrent, but through which some of the Hebrew people had entered into the possession of the Promised Land. This geographical fact suggests that for all men God may turn the Vale of Affliction into the Golden Gate.

Jesus prayed for his followers, "that they may all be one" (John 17:21). On Columbus Day, 1958,

The Bible in American Life

there was laid in New York the cornerstone for the Interchurch Center, a building to house the American office of the World Council of Churches, the headquarters of the National Council of Churches, and many denominational offices of more than thirty communions, with over 34,000,000 members who co-operate in the National Council of Churches.

President Eisenhower came to lay the cornerstone, into which he sealed a copy of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible containing the words: "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone." It would appear that Archie Robertson was right when he wrote: "The events narrated in the New Testament are still the most exciting news the human race ever had; and for many Americans the excitement, far from wearing off, seems to be just beginning."

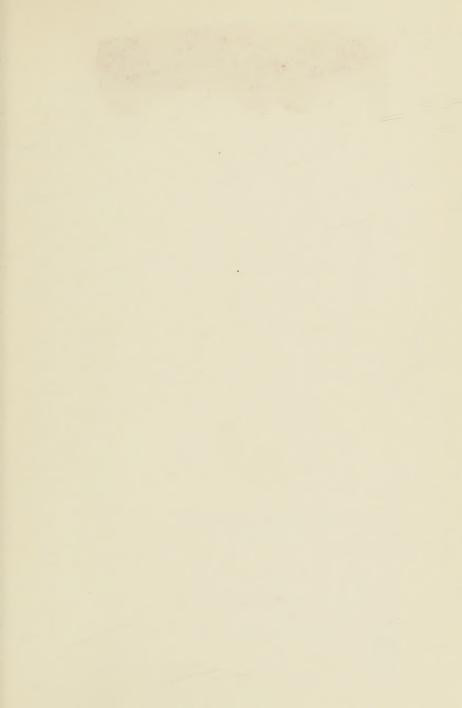
THE AUTHOR AND HIS BOOK

JOSEPH CARTER SWAIM, churchman, scholar and teacher, and since 1954 Executive Director of the Department of English Bible for the National Council of the Churches of Christ, was born in Selma, Ala., June 23, 1904. He attended Washington and Jefferson College where he was graduated with a B.A. degree in 1925. Two years later he received his Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree from Western Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pa., and a Masters degree in that field of study in 1929. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Edinburgh, 1931 (he was an assistant pastor in Scotland during 1930), and was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Missouri Valley College in 1942. From 1931 to 1941 he was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Staten Island, later moving to St. Louis where he held a pastorship until 1944. He has taught at the American University in Beirut, Lebanon, and became professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis at Western Theological Seminary, a post he held until 1954 when he was called upon to direct the Department of English Bible for the National Council. As a member of the Standard Bible Committee, he assisted in the translation of the Revised Standard Version of the Apocrypha, published in 1957. He participated in the American Broadcasting Company's nationally broadcast program, "Pilgrimage," during the summers of 1955 to 1957, is a frequent lecturer, and his meditations for Christmas and Lent have been nationally syndicated in many newspapers. A contributor of articles and book reviews to various publications including Religion in Life, Theology Today, Interpretation, Christian Century, and innumerable others, Dr. Swaim is the author of Right and Wrong Ways to Use the Bible (Westminister Press, 1953); Do You Understand the Bible? (Westminister Press, 1954); and Body, Soul and Spirit (Thomas Nelson, 1957). He was married to the former Charlotte G. Klein in Edinburgh in 1930; they have two sons, Joseph, Ir. and Stephen, and make their home in New York City.

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